When Love Is King

By

Isabel Richey

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(Apr. 5, 1901—5,000.)

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MRS. ISABEL RICHEY.

WHEN LOVE IS KING.

BY

ISABEL RICHEY.

Author of A HARP OF THE WEST, Etc.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESS OF GEO. F. LASHER.
1900.

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TO MY
HUSBAND AND MY BOY,
THIS BOOK IS
LOVINGLY INSCRIBED.

I. R.

PREFACE.

THERE are many skillful ways of serving up knowledge in popular form.

To arrange facts and array inexorable laws in such alluring style that the common reader studies them with pleasure and profit is the work of gifted men and women.

In fiction and in poetry, in prose and in verse, these teachers are leading the better faculties and emotions of our race into training and discipline.

The following volume is replete with good teachings, and the best and highest aspirations.

It plants thoughts as others plant trees, and they are beautiful, pure, and useful.

It is a satisfaction, after nearly half a century's residence in Nebraska, to see the transmutation of prairies to human homes, and to behold groves and orchards, foliage, flower and fruit, where the Indian and his commissariat, the buffalo, wandered when these vast plains were first opened up to the white race for homes, in 1854.

But the change in intellectual conditions has

HOME OF MRS. ISABEL RICHEY

TO A BOOK.

Thou art a stranger unto all the earth
  Save me alone, and yet I banish thee—
  Cast thee adrift upon life's troubled sea,
That thou mayst try thy fate and prove thy worth.

But never think there is not in my heart
  A tender place where thou wert wont to dwell,
  Nor ere believe I do not love thee well,
Thou fondly cherished one, because we part.

I am thy mother and I fain would know
  What faults and follies may in thee abide,
  So must I send thee, dear one, from my side.
Since I can never judge, who love thee so.

The world is critical and bleak and cold,
  It is not likely thou canst win its praise,
  But if thou earnestly pursue thy ways,
Its grim austerity it may unfold.

Then go, beloved, I dare not contend
  That thou art perfect, tho' I love thee well;
  Yet I will pray for thee, and who can tell
But somewhere, somewhere thou mayst find a friend.
  December 19, 1897.

WHEN LOVE IS KING.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

O love, O golden flower with diamond heart,
And odor like the winds from Paradise;
Thou art the one thing needful. Having thee
There is no sun nor moon, no night nor day,
No winter and no summer, spring nor fall
Nor anything save one sweet season. Love!

II.

The year was fifty-six, and Iowa
The scene of this most unassuming tale;
The time was summer and the month was June;
The day the wedding day of two young souls
Whose love had been the village's delight.
The groom was Rufus Stone, the miller's son,
And Catherine LeRoy the happy bride.
A thousand roses rang their crimson bells;
The lilies drank their health from crystal cups,
And such a choir as trilled their wedding song
Was never heard in any city fane.
These Nature gave: youth, health and faithful hearts
And friends had added from their choicest store
Something to swell the list. A linen cloth,
A dish of filigree, a china vase,

Or some fair fragile thing (as frail as life),
To testify their love.
Beside the mill
A little cottage stood, their first abode.
Each of the village wives came in to see
Where her gift fitted best, and give advice,
For Cath'rine was so young.
And Rufus toiled
From early until late, and prospered, too,
Here sped the summer of their wedded love—
As short as sweet.
'Twas here their child was born
The second year. His mother called him
Raymond,
Which was the hero's name in some brave tale
She had but lately read.
In secret soul
The father had expected it to bear,
(In case it was a boy) his father's name.
But Catherine had wrought a miracle
In giving birth to such a splendid child,
And surely she might give a name to it.
So, flow'ry though it was, 'twas well enough,
He must be satisfied.
And now, indeed,
The days were scarcely long enough to hold
Their perfect happiness.
The baby grew,
A most uncommon child.

At seven months
He talked—his mother told the things he said,
No other understood him quite, but she
Whose soul could speak another tongue with his
Missed not a word of all he chose to tell.
Some greyhaired mothers smiled and shook
their heads,
And to each other said, "They *all* talk *so*."
But not to Catherine.
So fled the years.

III.

One oft has stood upon the ocean beach,
And has beheld at the horizon's verge
A wave arise, a fold against the sky
That seems of no offense, but as it nears
It gains in strength and power, in breadth and
height,
In force and tumult and velocity,
Until, at last, it breaks upon the rocks
And covers all with foam.
So there arose
Upon time's tranquil sea the wave of war.
Men saw it far from shore and doubted it
Would live to reach the land.
Yet on it came.
It broke with awful sound and swept the earth
A crimson sea of blood.
Pale, timid, Peace
Took flight and carnage reigned.

The air grew bright
With spears and naked swords.
Brother arose
And pierced his brother's heart with deadly steel.
The echo reached to far-off Iowa.
The rolling drum, and fife with shrieking note,
Called heroes forth to mingle in the strife.
Nor called in vain, from ev'ry farm and field,
From shop and forge and school, from book and pen,
The answer came,
Not for the love of war,
But for the love of right and liberty.
First in the surging crowd came Rufus Stone,
Love beckoned back with warm and rosy hand.
His courage sought to drown in Cath'rine's tears,
But Duty's glance met his, he needs must go
And leave her weeping on her baby's curls.
'Twas hard for her, alas, 'twas hard for all
Who gave their gallant husbands and their sons
To feed the cannon's mouth.
At home they wept,
And weeping toiled, and prayed, prayed and waited.
Waited, oh, to wait is hardest work of all!
The blood may warm at sound of bursting shell,
The soul grow brave amid the smoke and glare.
A man may die, nor suffer half the pain

That comes to her who has no wound to show.
Poor Cath'rine missed the clamor of the mill,
The open doors, the tramp of heavy feet,
The loud "hello" of farmers bringing grain,
The rippling sound of the thick golden stream
That flowed into the bins.
So still, so still,
Save for the faithful wheel that turned and turned,
But brought no profits in.
She often thought
'Twas like the tales of poor senility
Which have no point of interest, nor end.
Sometimes a letter came that he had writ
With many cunning shifts for ink and pen,
Pale faded liquids made of washing blue,
And quills ill-fashioned by unpracticed hands;
With these poor coutrements the narrow page
Was made to blossom with forget-me-nots,
And filled with lines that made in sentiment
Complete amends for all they lacked in time.
Of these hard straits full many a bard was born
Who, in a life of peace, had never sung.
A common grief makes consolation, too,
A common thing, and all the village shared
Each poet's musings, and the faded wreaths
Wrought by the artist's hand.
And then again
For weeks and weeks no message was received,

And anxious eyes and hearts bent o'er the lists
Of missing and of dead; and white lips cried
(Because no message came by that dread route),
"Thanks be to God above," or "God be praised."
Or if, indeed, the name they loved was found,
Moaned, "God be merciful," and wept and prayed.

* * * * * * * *

Oft she would sit with fixed and staring eyes,
Answering the child, not knowing what she said,
Because her soul was gone in search of him
Her best beloved, the father of her boy.
And oft again, the load she had to bear,
The separation and the fear and all,
Would break her down, and she would sit and weep,
As only those who suffer know the way,
And then the boy would come and kiss her cheek
And tell her not to cry but talk to him.
He'd pull her hands away and bid her tell
Of night and war and bloody battlefields,
And father marching in the snow and rain
To make a people free; of father, whom
He could remember still, though but a lad
Of three brief years when last he saw his face.
"What will my father do?" he'd gravely ask,
"When rains come down and thunders loudly roll—

Where will he sleep safe from the raging
storm?"
And she would tell him, while her tears fell fast,
That father had no bed, but needs must march
And fight in all this dark and bitter rain
"To set a people free."
He learned the phrase,
"To set a people free," and often would
Alone or with his mates make use of it.
And other times, robed in his snowy gown,
When moonlight lay like silver on the floor,
He'd ask his childish questions thick and fast,
What was the flag, and why men fought for it?
Why men should fight if they were brothers all?
If yon round thing shining so brightly there
Was father's tent pitched on the purple plain?
And if the stars that blazed so brilliantly
Were bivouac fires at which the soldiers sat—
His father, too?
And she, poor tender soul,
Could scarcely answer him for tears, but tried
To smile, lest he be made unhappy, too.
Then when, at last, his blue-veined eyelids
closed
And rosy lips were stilled awhile in sleep,
She'd lay him down upon his spotless bed
And look her love on him and kiss it in
So soft and still he felt it not nor moved.

IV.

All summer long—'twas May when Rufus left—
The wheel turned on, fed by the narrow stream.
The autumn thro', though choked by fallen leaves,
It halted not, nor when the ice grew thick
And hung in diamond pendants from its edge,
Like Time, it circled on.
Then came a day,
The sixth of that fair month which smiles thro' tears,
And Rufus had been gone almost a year,
When Catherine took note the river moaned
With almost human sound and hurried by.
All through the night it told its dreary tale;
She could not sleep until the dawn was near,
It gave her such distress.
She prayed for light,
And slumbered when it came. When she awoke
The moaning sound had ceased, the wheel stood still.
She had not dreamed how much it had become
A portion of her life till it was hushed,
And if the moaning had been hard to bear,
The silence seemed a far more heavy load—
Another thing for which to wait and wait.
O waiting, waiting is a weary work;

To long for morning and to yearn for night;
To pray for news, and fear it when it comes;
To smile when tears of blood are in the heart;
Hear steps and voices when no sound is nigh;
To start from fevered dreams and call and wake
Alone, alone; oh God 'tis weary work.
But waiting, too, must end.
The message came
From Shiloh's crimson field in Tennessee
That Major Stone, on that first dreadful day,
Received the summons that had called him Home.
Why should I seek to tell her bitter grief?
She lived it through as many another did.
They brought his body home, and from the church,
Where they were wed six happy years ago,
They carried him and laid him down to sleep—
Wrapped in the folds of red, white and blue,
For which he died—his deep and endless sleep.
Thenceforth the boy held kingdom in her heart;
He was a comely lad, with raven curls
That fell about his shoulders like a veil,
(If somewhat girlish, one could that forgive,
Knowing she had but him). His cheek was red
As roses by the hedge in summer time,
And eyes as brown as some wild pheasant's wing

That skimmed his native prairies in the fall.
Straight, too, he was. "His father's very build,"
'Twas often, often said by some old dame,
And Catherine was pleased as pleased could be.
His father was his hero, and the war
The one grand theme of which he never tired.
In all his play the martial spirit reigned,
His toys were drums and howitzers and swords.
He marched his troops throughout the summer days
With wooden guns adown the village street.
When he at length outgrew the cottage walls,
Come seven or eight, he builded with his mates
Great forts of snow and battered them
And cried, that he was Major Stone come out
To fight and die to set a people free!
The other lads gave way to him, for they
Were only sons of privates or, perchance,
Of corporals or captains at the most.
And, too, of that restricted company
No other boy could claim a father slain
On bloody battlefield. A majesty
Was thus conferred on him which he could feel.

* * * * * * * * * *

And fourteen years went by of storm and shine,
Of tears and laughter and of joy and pain.
The boy became the youth, the youth the man,
Eagerly wond'ring what life held for him.

PART II.

I.

Beneath the ev'ning sun the yellowing fields
Lay all about the village like the frame
Of shining gold that shuts a picture in.
Nor lacked the scene a glass to cover it,
For overhead a crystal sheet spread out,
So clear one might see through to deeps beyond,
There one pale light already faintly gleamed
To show the soul the way to God's own house,
The house of endless peace.
The fruit hung red
Amongst the russet leaves that softly fell
To mother earth in seeming sweet content—
As falls a ripened soul in God's good time—
And children played at gathering it up
In round and rosy piles which they called forts.
Erstwhile the fort became itself the gun
From which the shell was hurled, and presently
They ate their cannon balls in unconcern.
Some older than the rest, about sixteen,
With heads all full of romance and their veins
Of life's rich wine, were counting out the seeds
From fruit that had been "named," thiswise to tell
If some close-guarded love loved in return.
Nearby their mothers and their grandams wrought
With busy hands, and careful minds intent
On well filled cellars 'ere the season came

When none might gather in the wintry fields;
Or else, their thoughts distracted by the noise,
They stood, or sat with bonnets in their laps,
And talked of bullets, too, of James and John
Who fell at Gettysburg in sixty-three,
Or of Antietam's field where William lay
All night with shattered limbs, and ne'er a drop
To cool his fevered lips. Then wand'ring on,
Of Chancellorsville, and Fredericksburg, and all
The fearful carnage and distress that comes
With wicked war.
One slender, pale young wife,
Who held a rosy baby in her arms,
Cared not for such discourse. She was too young
To take an interest in mournful things,
And yet too old for childish tricks and charms.
Her mind was full of the imperative
And vital things befitting to her age.
She slung her burden to the other hip,
And said that Martha Willis had gone by
An hour ago to sit with Cath'rine Stone.
This brought new fuel to the waning fire
Of friendly gossip and they guessed and guessed
If Raymond would be wed in holidays
To Madeline Van Dorn, and all agreed
They were a handsome pair as one would see.

* * * * * * * * * *

But night was closing in. With baskets full,
And hampers bursting with their luscious load,
They sought their homeward ways, calling
"Good night."

And breaking into groups of two and three,
"To-morrow" was the note that echoed back,
Oh, glad to-morrow—when the heart is young!

II.

For years and years, 'twas long before the war
The village school had flourished in the care
Of Parson Bowles, an able, pious man
Whom everybody loved. Five days a week
He sat behind his desk. The sixth he wrote
A sermon for his flock, and on the seventh,
Arrayed in spotless robes, he told the tale
Of God's abounding love, and none could doubt
Who looked into his face, he knew his theme.
His wife was his assistant; ev'ry day
A class of girls parsed nouns and verbs to her,
And after books she taught them how to sew,
To draw out threads and put them in again,
To paint in oils and knit, to make a rose
Of beads on velvet ground, and many things—
Some useful, some ornate, but best of all
She taught them how to live a Christian life
By her example.
At last there came a change.
One day, 'twas in November, somewhat late,
The Parson could not come to teach the school,
He had a touch of fever, nothing much,
The village doctor said, he'd rally soon
And be about again as good as new.
Yet as the days wore on he gained no strength,
But rather seemed to lose what strength he had
By slow degrees, and if it *could* be so,

Grew yet more like the Master whom he served.
Ere long the prophets ceased to prophesy
That he would soon be well, but brought him
flowers,—
The usual sign that hope has taken flight.
He knew as well as they his time was nigh,
And when his boat sailed in one winter's night,
'Mid snow and ice and bitter wailing winds,
He went on board in most supreme content.

* * * * * * * *

And Madeline Van Dorn, long miles away,
Read in the daily press of his demise,
And that the school would need another head,
Besought the place, and it was given her.
The good old parson's death at Christmas time
Had put an end to learning until spring,
Which time the teacher came—young Madeline,
And took up her abode with Mrs. Bowles,
Who late had lived alone.
'Twas well for both.
The widow kept her class of little girls
As she had ever done, and Madeline
Took up the branches that had erst been taught
By dear old Parson Bowles. A strange conceit
It seemed for one so fair, and of her years,
To deal in ancient Greek and algebra.

III.

The roses fade when summer takes her flight,
And em'rald leaves take on a richer hue.
The lightsome breeze gives way to keener
winds,
Yet autumn, too, has many dainty flowers

A man might gladly wear upon his breast.
The summer was not long for Catherine.
The frosts of sorrow early touched her soul
And made its leaves to change. The roses died,
Yet in their stead the purple asters bloomed;
The youthful winds of laughter had been stilled
But in her voice was something low and sweet
That more than one had found a magic spell.
Still all who came found but one argument,
And that was "no," she had no wish to wed,
The five full years of peace had brought to them
A store sufficient for their modest needs.
They lived in comfort by the silent mill.
(Its wheel had never turned since Rufus died.)
Raymond had made a study of the law,
And talked of "Nolle" and of "Habeas"
With wond'rous fluency. Yet he was not
Disposed to take on airs above his friends,
Or make them think he found their pleasures
dull.
He had a level head for twenty-one,
When Latin works such havoc in the brain.

IV.

Beyond the orchard and the golden fields
Across the bridge which spanned the narrow
stream
The spinster bent her steps to Cath'rine's house,
And knocked upon the panels eagerly,
She had so much to tell it burdened her.
And when the widow came and let her in
She turned the conversation artfully,
As women often do, toward her theme.

When she had ceased to speak, her story done,
The mother's heart cried out, "It cannot be!
This son of mine must love and wed I know,
For love and marriage is the right of all,
But not with Madeline, if this be true."
Then wrung her thin white hands and wept
again.
" 'Tis true enough, too true," the woman said.
And drew her hand across her eyes and sighed.
"Too true, too true," she whispered half aloud,
Then stood and swept the mother up and down
With look of pity that was half contempt.
Then gath'ring up her shawl about her head
She raised the latch and passed and closed the
door
Unknowing she had shut contentment out
For many a weary year.

She was not bad,
Old Martha,—only soured and somewhat lone,
And bitter from the lack of little hands
To smooth her wrinkled cheek and comfort her.
For she had met life's autumn all alone
And found a home within her brother's house
Already full of growing boys and girls.
She sighed again and muttered in her shawl
That Catherine was foolish, but the tale
Was true, too true, nor any fault of hers.
That it was less to bear than many folks
Had borne and made no sign (she meant herself,
For it was known she had been crossed in love).
The sun had gone to rest and shadows crept
About her path before she reached the door.
The lamp was lit, the supper table set,

And Rose, her brother's wife, poured out the tea.
There was no empty seat, and Martha felt
No one had cared if she had not returned.
None spoke to her or asked, "Where have you been?"
Though she was seldom absent from the board.
It made her sick at heart. She climbed the stairs
Up to her attic chamber in the roof
Disconsolate indeed.

"Oh, Madeline,"
She breathed, "Oh, Madeline, I've done thee wrong,
A deep and deadly wrong. Why did I speak
When I should know so well there is no fate
In all this dreary world so hard as this;
To live and die unloved. No threatened curse,
No taint of birth or blood could bring such grief.
The hard old face lost all its careworn look,
One shining tear slipped down the withered cheek
And plashed against her hand, a diamond drop,
Bright as the set of a betrothal ring.
Upon the oaken stand a casket lay
Closed with a lock and key, and shut, I trow,
For many, many days.

In softened mood
She sprung the cover up and there disclosed
A slender golden hoop with two small hearts
Transfixed by cupid's spear.

No need to tell,
'Twas her engagement ring. She slipped it on

And raised it to her lips. She sighed a name,
Her long lost lover's name.
In fevered haste
She brought a garment forth, a silken robe,
Of palest wild-rose pink, cut low and round
To fit a girlish throat, about the edge
Hung narrow acorn fringe with beads between
And gimp and golden threads.
She locked the door
And lit her tallow candle, and began
To put the garment on with shaking hands.
"'Tis twenty years," she said, "since Jacob
died,"
(Not every lover has a fancy name)
"And five years more since that unhappy day
That should have seen the union of our hands,
But saw, instead, the grave of youthful hopes,
How small a thing can turn life's course away
And cause a shipwreck!
True, the fault was mine,
That I have suffered all these weary years."
The gown adjusted by the candle's gleam,
She threw a veil of lace about her head
And stood transfigured. Age and grief took
flight,
And left her there, a girl of twenty-two,
In robe and ring and veil;
A bridegroom came
And kissed her on the lips and led her forth,
The flick'ring candle burned and waned and
died.
The household slept in quietness and peace.

She had been wont to rise before the rest,
To make the kettle hot and lay the cloth.
So when she came not at the usual hour
Nor spoke in answer to their knocks and calls,
They forced the lock by strong and steady blows
And found her there, clad in her bridal robes,
Sleeping the sleep from which none ever wake.
And so she died, and so they made her bed;
And as 'tis ever done in this vain world,
They brought white flowers and laid them on her breast,
Who had but leaves before, but withered leaves.

O love! O love! The All, and all in all,
The one best thing without comparison,
Who hath thee not, though glory fill the sky,
And rainbows hang the heavens like gleaming chains,
Tho' music sob through all the universe,
Yet still must dwell in silence and in gloom.

V.

When Martha had departed from the house,
The mother stood as one who walks in sleep,
Looking, but seeing nothing anywhere.
She had not said "good-bye," or "come again,"
Or anything as was the village style;
Nor did she know that she had been remiss,
Her heart was torn for Raymond, for her son;
Her dear and only child. All else was lost
In her great fear that he might suffer pain.

'Twas like a blow had fallen on her heart
And stopped it like a clock.
But Madeline!
The world came back to her with sudden force,
Who could believe the tale that Martha told?
Yet Martha was not prone to speak untruths
Though stern and cold and sad.
What should she do—
Tell Raymond what was said and break his heart?
Oh, no; in pity, no. In silence bide
And learn if it were true. Ah, that were best.
And if it were not true he need not know
Nor suffer any pain. She breathed again,
Though bitterly perplexed for Raymond's peace.
(She thought not of the girl, of Madeline,
Her woes were but a woman's woes, at best.)
But Raymond was her son, her only son,
And should not be opposed.
She laid the cloth,
And with it laid her plans; she drew the tea
And her conclusions, too.
She spoke no word
Save sweetest syllables when Raymond came.
And listened, while he told the village news,
With interested look and smiling face.

* * * * * * * * *

This was the common ground on which they met—
The teacher and the student of the law;
That both loved learning, and that both were young.

The old, old story in another form,
Yet fresh and new to them.
Their world approved
And gossiped, save a few old men
Who never had been young.
And so it stood
When Martha Willis came and brought her news.

VI.

We're prone to say this or the other thing
Happened by chance. Yet nothing happens so,
But by design of One more wise than we.
It was no chance that Martha had been called
To visit out at Dee, where Madeline was born,
Then carry back the news that wrought such woe.
A cousin wrote that help was hard to get;
That she would need help soon, would Martha come?
And Martha, who had not in twenty years
Been over night from home, was glad to go.
The while they waited for the great event,
The invalid from curiosity
Inquired of Madeline, and how she fared;
Then idly told the story of her life.

* * * * * * * * *

The mother set about to prove the tale,
Made for herself an errand out to Dee.
(A plan evolved from many sleepless hours.)
She questioned where she could, the landlord first,
He was a jolly man, with shining pate

Fringed round with auburn locks now streaked
with gray;
He had black, twinkling eyes, and ruddy cheeks
That glowed like two red apples on a bough;
His voice was loud and hearty, and his laugh
Was like a clap of thunder on the roof.
Yet he had small occasion for a laugh
To point the tale of sorrow which he wove.
"Know Dick Van Dorn?" oh, yes; he knew him
well;
He knew his wife, also; she, too, was dead.
The children? Yes, he knew the children, too;
Poor wretched girls, both crazy as a loon,
Each since her child was born.

And then began
To tell of Madeline, how fair she was,
How bright and quick to learn—knew French
and Greek,
And 'twould be hard to tell how many things.
He had a brother, too, had Dick Van Dorn,
Who went to war and never more returned.
Dead? no, not dead as anybody knew,
His name was never seen on any list;
But still he might be dead for all of that,
For many fell and left no trace behind.
A likely sort of man he seemed to be,
And rather well to do,—so on and on.
How they had come to Dee in fifty-nine
From somewhere in the East, two little girls
Of maybe eight and ten, himself and wife,
Were all there was at first, but in a month
Another babe was born. The older girls
Were rather dark and plain, but Madeline

Was pretty as a flower, with rosy cheeks
And curls and dark blue eyes. The mother, too,
Was young and beautiful—a girl herself.
How both the parents died, the girls grew up—
Took care of Madeline—then married, both;
Had little ones that died, then died themselves
Bereft of intellect—poor girls, poor girls.
Discussing the Van Dorn's he took a turn
At all the little village, one by one.
The mother listened with her outward ears,
But much of his loquacity was lost.
Her mind held place for nothing but her son,
The girl he loved; the woes that threatened him.
The landlord sighed aloud, and she sighed, too,
He laughed out gaily and she forced a smile:
Taking her cue from him she seemed polite
And he was quite content.

No doubt remained
With Catherine. The tale was sadly true.
And now to break the tie that held the twain
And yet not break their hearts.

Knowing herself,
She feared her child might die beneath the shock.
And so for days succeeding her return
She crucified herself upon the cross
Of her maternal love.

At length a thought,
An inspiration came. She ever had
A talent to compose. She would invent
A story like the truth (changing the names),
And read it to the boy. Himself should say

The righteous thing to do, for these poor souls.
His judgment given, unbiased by his love,
Would make him stronger to endure his grief.
And so she labored with a heavy heart
And wrote the touching tale.
One rainy night
She brought her manuscript and read aloud.
All unsuspicious what it meant for him,
He listened silently.
She parted them,
The hero and the lovely Geraldine;
Made each live out a Christian life alone
And laid them, at the finale, side by side.
She ventured then to ask if he approved
Of such an ending? Whether it had been
A better story if the two had wed?
(She could revise it, if he thought it best.)
But he inveighed against the change, and said,
That such true love so bitterly denied
Would purify them both and bring them peace.
"Yet think," she urged, "just take the story home,
Would *you* have courage in so hard a case,
To be a hero such as Norman was?"
And he replied if it were his ill fate
He would have courage, as a hero should.
For think, he said, of all that was implied
If these two wed; what evils must descend
And blight the future of unnumbered souls.
E'en for themselves no happiness could come
Beset by such black fears.
He argued well,
As some lone mariner upon the sea

Might wreck his boat by over-zealousness—
He sank his vessel, too.
She told him all,
When he could comprehend it's full import,
He grew as white as death, and stared at her
As one who sees a ghost.
The mother wept—
A woman's refuge in an evil hour.
The sight of tears make havoc in a man,—
And he laid down his grief to comfort her.
He told her that he was a hero's son,
And strong to do the right. The crisis past,
She told it o'er again with more detail,
Holding his hand and softly kissing him
As if he was a child of seven years.
None will deny 'tis easier to forget
A bitter grief 'mongst unfamiliar scenes;
And when the talk was done, 'twas all agreed
That Raymond should go out into the world
To labor hard and, haply, to forget.

VII.

'Tis man's peculiar nature to believe
That he loves most and best, whether always
From under-valuation of himself
And his abilities to draw out love,
One cannot say. With Raymond it was so.
He saw so much approaching the Divine
In Madeline, that by comparison
He deemed himself of pitiful account.
She had no faults to him, while he was full
Of failings and defects. It was not strange
That he should worship her, but marvelous

That she should care for him. He felt it thus.
And he assumed, by reason of his youth
And inexperience, that he might bear
A measure of her pain besides his own.
To go without a word—to be misjudged,
And to appear unworthy in her sight—
Was bitterness and boundless sacrifice,
And must bring some reward. His heroics
Were natural to his years.
To Catherine
He said, "She will forget, for what am I
That she should grieve for me.
Of what avail
To harrow both our souls by parting scenes,
Since what must be, must be? How can I say
'Your blood is tainted with a bitter curse
And so we cannot wed'—to Madeline?
So I will go without a sign to her—
Without a single token of farewell.
And maybe she in thinking me untrue
Will have less grief to bear."
The mother said,
"Think you, my son, I loved your father less
Than I was dear to him? You cannot judge
What Madeline Van Dorn has found in you.
I do not doubt her love is like your own,—
Pure as an altar flame. She may not speak.
But you dare not, a hero's only son,
Depart in silence thus. You must once more
Present yourself to her. I counsel not
That you should tell her all. It will suffice
If you confess your love and say farewell.
Let her not doubt my son's sincerity,

That would be more than Cath'rine Stone could bear,
Besides you owe her this—yourself as well."
He saw that she was right, and Madeline
Would suffer more by thinking him untrue
Than any blow Fate could administer.
She loved her ideal in loving him,
It must not be destroyed, at any cost.
(There were no actual vows between these two,
Tho' they had looked their love and kissed and sighed,
As all young lovers do—and old as well,
Cupid has no respect for silver hairs.)
It thrilled him, too, that she should counsel him
To do the thing he wished down in his soul—
See Madeline once more and say farewell.
And so when ev'ning purpled all the hills
He paid his court to her. She had not seemed
So beautiful as now since e'er they met,
Nor half so dear to him.
He said to her
That fate had dealt to him a bitter blow
At his most vital point—his love for her.
That something had occurred which parted them;
Though he adored her still and always would,
He could not claim her hand. He deemed it best
For her and for himself that he should go.
And Madeline, with blue eyes full of tears,
Looked up at him, and begged to know the worst.
He died a hundred deaths, but would not yield
The knowledge he possessed.

And so good-bye
To hope and joy and peace, but not to love,
Since both their hearts were true as God's own stars.

VIII.

It seemed to some a matter of offense
That Raymond Stone should take so grave a step,
Nor ask their good advice.
"And why," they cried,
"Such wonderful dispatch and such strange haste?"
What could such conduct mean? But none could tell.
Vain were the errands that were daily run
To Cath'rine's house in quest of various things.
The idle women took a turn for books,
The busy ones sought for a new design
For quilts and mats and rugs.
She met them all
With seeming cheerfulnes and heart at rest,
But told them nothing of the secret cause
Of Raymond's sudden flight; within herself
She understood them all and loved them less
For their duplicity.
And now, indeed,
Time dragged along as it had never done
E'en in those early days, for always then
She had her helpless child, her comforter.
And now she was alone, no word, no sound
From morning until night except from her.
The silence seemed to cut her like a knife—
To beat upon her ears like thunder claps,

And startle all her nerves. Yet she was brave.
And when his letters came from far-off worlds,
Telling of sights and sounds all new and strange,
She answered with a cheerful resume
Of village happenings. But not a word
Of how her spirit mourned at loss of him.
She wrote of Madeline—that she was well,
The roses were no paler on her cheek
However she might grieve.

Then in his turn,
Whene'er her letters came, he'd skim them o'er
In search of that his deep heart hunger craved;
The name of Madeline, he'd read the words
And count her cold and false. So grew the breach.
At length he wrote that he had found a friend,
A man who like himself had suffered much
At Fate's unkindly hand. They had agreed
To leave the busy hive wherein they dwelt,
And seek the islands of Hesperides
With their fair golden fruit. "The poet says,"
'Twas thus he wrote to her; "That Nature speaks
A various language into ev'ry soul
That doth commune with her. She hath a balm
To cure his ev'ry wound. Believing this,
We, too, would seek her fountains and be healed."
He told her not to grieve, that in those vales
"Where rolls the Oregon," he would be safe.
He would remember her with fondest love,
And when the wound had healed he would return

To the maternal roof.
"When will it be?"
She cried in bitterness, "How can I wait
Through weary months and years?"
Then she bethought
That even this were better than the thing
She had so lately feared.
Thus she was torn
And tortured in her soul, till by and by,
Her face grew thin and white, and in her eyes
A fev'rish glitter burned. Sleep slighted her,
Or when it came brought dark foreboding dreams.
So turned the pages in the book of Time,
And so her story ran.

IX.

And Madeline?
Awakened from her sweet romantic dream
Thus ruthlessly, her world seemed blank indeed.
Nature herself put on a different garb.
The youth and beauty of the village smiled,
And looked askance at her; she was serene,
And never by the tremor of an eye
Betrayed her consciousness. She taught her school
As if 'twere all of life. When Sunday came
She sang her clear soprano in the choir
And seemed all happiness. But in the night,
When others calmly slept, she waked and wept,
And waged a bitter battle with her love.
Since she could not explain the mystery,
She must conceal her sorrow and her pain.
Hope for awhile told tales of his return,

Of explanations and a happy end,
As is the case in books. But hope grew vain.
Then other suitors came; so fair a maid
Need not to linger long disconsolate.
The weaker sex were slower to forgive
(They knew not what), but deigned to smile at last.
So passed the incident, and was forgot
Save in two women's hearts.
A crisis came,
Poor Cath'rine took her bed from very grief.
The lonely weeks had worn her nerves away,
Till she at last succumbed.
A tiny girl,
A pupil in the class of Mrs. Bowles,
Told this to Madeline. The arrow pierced.
His mother ill? alone? it must not be.
She would herself attend, if others failed,
Beside the suff'rer's couch.
And so they met,
Who loved young Raymond so, and kissed and cried.
The mother told the girl what she had learned
From Martha and at Dee.
And Madeline
Acknowledged freely that the thing was true.
At her unripened years she had not known
That this threw any shade upon her life,
Except deep grief for them. That she herself
Was liable to fall, as they had done,
Beneath the awful curse, she had not dreamed.
And life, till now a garden full of flowers,
Seemed sudden white with frost.

Hope had not died
That Raymond would return. She knew it now,
When round her like a wall this thing arose.
No love for her, no silv'ry wedding bells,
No cosy home as other women had,
No childish hands to lead her in the way
When age came with its veil.
And Raymond Stone
Might wed where'er he would, but not with her,
And so she passed through her Gethsemane.
Their love for Raymond was a tender tie
That bound them each to each. It was agreed,
Since one was ill and both were desolate,
The girl should come and place her household
gods
Beside the widow's hearth.
Thenceforward life
Held some sweet promise forth for Catherine.
She learned to wait and watch for Madeline,
To know her step upon the gravel walk,
To love the soul so beautiful and pure
That bowed so patiently. Their quiet days
Were like a pastoral, monotonous
Unto the casual eye, but deep as death;
Aye, deeper still, as life. Mother and child
Far less congenial are full many times
Than these at length became, each eagerly
Sought to anticipate the other's wish,
And eye met eye forever with a smile
Whatever lay within.
The illness passed,
Unable to withstand such ministry.
One could not call them happy, but at least
Tranquillity came in and dwelt with them.

PART III.

I.

Beyond the tall white mountains of his dreams,
The martyred Raymond and his hapless friend
Dwelt 'neath the em'rald pines.
To name one's grief,
And give it honor's place is half its cure.
As it becomes a habit in a church,
Lest caution be maintained, to say "Amen,"
And "Amen" comes to mean nothing at all.
So is a petted grief, we bow to it
And sigh con sively because we *should*
Long after we have ceased to suffer pain.
These two young men each builded up a throne
And placed his grief thereon, each bowed him down
At morning, noon and night. Sincere at first
It soon became a custom and a form.
And as they toiled beside the sparkling stream
In placer beds whose sands were bright with gold,
These comrades found that life held many things
Besides a woman's eyes. Toil brought fatigue,
And weariness brought sleep. Sleep brought them peace
In both her rosy hands.

These things they learned;
God hath a thousand stars tho' dark the night,
He plants His flowers upon the lonely plain;
His silver streams laugh o'er the barren stones;
Whatever else may change.
Man learns to look
Into his Father's face among such scenes.
Yet Raymond was not false to Madeline;
He loved her in his heart.
Was there a flower
More perfect than the rest—it spoke of her.
Was there a note of music in the stream—
Her voice was there. Was there a golden shaft
Falling o'er an abyss—it was her glance.
The lesson that he learned the truest, best,
Was, self is least of all.
He saw the storm
Break on the mountain side above his head,
And gather in its arms stones and debris
To heap them in the vales. The works of man
By strength and patience wrought were swept
away
Like unresisting straws. He heard men rave
And vow themselves undone—then presently
Heard shouts of ecstacy because the floods
Had swept the rocks and laid the ledges bare,
All flecked with shining gold. He said within,
"God surely knoweth best; there may be gold

Deep hid in me beneath the coarse debris."
His soul expanded and his spirit grew
More than he recognized.
Nature is true,
And brought thus near to her—he, too, was true.

* * * * * * * * *

The winter's icy feet but seldom left
A track upon their vales. A tiny tent
Served them for an abode throughtout the year.

II.

They sat beside its door one eventide,
And Raymond lightly fingered a guitar—
An instrument one would not think to find
In such a solitude.
He played old airs
That Madeline had loved in other years,
And dreamed of her, scarce knowing that he dreamed.
His comrade, Andrew, from a violin
Drew far more plaintive strains, completely lost
To his environment. The river sang
To their accompaniment, unwritten words.
The night was full of peace.
A little boat
Upon the azure billows floated by;
A man hallooed and paddled to the shore.
They bade him welcome, for a visitor
Was far too seldom seen.

He came, he said,
From an abandoned mine back in the hills,
Where he had dwelled alone for many years.
"Had he done well?" "Oh,—fairly," he replied.
"But could not longer live in solitude."
The thought of home had haunted him of late,
And made life miserable.
They asked his name,
He answered, "Allan Searle,"
Where was his home?
"'Twas last in Iowa, the town of Dee."
"The town of Dee," struck Raymond like a lance—
His troubles hinged upon the town of Dee.
He asked no further, but invited him
To tarry for awhile. The cordial hand
And frank, ingenious face the trav'ler found
Too charming to resist. They drew the boat
High on the sandy shore beside the tent,
And he was "right at home."
"Not long," he said,
"I cannot linger long. For someone calls
Beyond the mountain peaks—I must away."
The stranger was not young, the sun had shone
Full sixty summers on his waving locks
And bleached them silver white.
He had endured
Privations and distress in search of gold,
Yet he was strong and vigorous of frame

And bore his hours of labor with the rest.
He taught them many secrets of the trade
Of mining precious ores.
His age showed most
In his garrulity, and that he told
The same tale o'er again unwittingly.
He talked of "finds" miraculously rich;
Of how men rushed into the newest camps;
Of prices paid for bare necessities
Astonishingly great. He told them how
A river had been turned from out its course,
By heavy toil and large expenditure,
Only to find the sands whereon it lay
Were barren as a stone, and how despair
Drove one poor miner mad. He loved to talk.
Sometimes the great Rebellion was his theme.
The battles he had seen and who had won;
What generals commanded in the fight.—
With dread details of agony and death.
Once when he had discoursed of bloody war,
His restlessness returned; he must begone.
A voice was calling him to Iowa.
He had a mission that he must fulfill.
Then from his breast he drew a faded purse
And brought a locket forth circled with pearls.
He held it in his hand with reverence
And pressed against the spring, there was revealed

Two tiny frames of gold within the case,
And each a picture held, pale ambrotypes,
Taken long, long ago and dimmed by time.
The stranger for a season was absorbed
In olden memories. Then half aloud:
"I have betrayed the trust reposed in me
By Major Rufus Stone."
Have you not seen,
Some cloudless summer day, the lightning flash
A-sudden o'er the sky—a miracle?
Such was the light that came o'er Raymond's face
And quite transfigured him. He reached a hand,
Without apology, and grasped the case.
He knew by instinct that this hoary man
Was God's own messenger.
"Who gave you this?"
He asked with shaking voice. "Where has it been
Through all the silent years since '62?"
And then he fell to sobbing like a child
And kissing either face.
"Father," he cried,
"And mother, can it be that you have come
To this far distant country seeking me?"
Old Allan stood aghast with wonderment,
Thinking the youth was mad. He did not know
That 'twas a Christian name the boy was called,

Therefore could not connect him with the man
Who died on Shiloh's field.
But Andrew knew
That Raymond's name was Stone, his father's fate
And all his history. He interposed:
"Tell us of Major Stone and all you know
Concerning him and his." He laid his arm
About his comrade's neck in sympathy.
The stranger thus discoursed:
"I saw him first,
Just as the fight began in which he fell.
He rode a dappled horse of iron gray
And sat him like a king. A crimson flower,
Which lay upon this breast, rivaled his cheek,
But put it not to shame. His eye was brown
And flashed with eager fire, and midnight hair
Curled 'neath his feathered brim in shining rings.
He had been sent with his brave company
To reinforce the left. Three regiments
Of Prentiss's strong men fell 'neath the fire
Of well-aimed rebel guns, and Sherman, too,
Suffered a fearful loss.
Hour after hour
The smoke rose from the field in leaden clouds,
And bullets shrieked, and ceaseless thunders rolled
From out the cannon's mouth.

A bloody stream
Swept o'er the April flowers and dyed them red,
And still I saw his plumes nod in the wind.
Then came a charge and from a splintered shell
I got a grievous wound." He bared his head,
And showed across the scalp a cicatrix.
"Awhile I lay in black oblivion;
The battle still progressed.

When life returned
The silence over all was like the grave,
And stars shone bright out in the purple sea.
I sought to rise and touched a chilly hand
That made my blood recoil, then, swooned again
Revived and heard a voice beside mine ear
Speaking a woman's name, as if in prayer.
The name of Catherine. 'God give her strength
To bear her bitter woes, and spare our child
To comfort her distress,' I heard one say.
And then I spoke: 'The storm is over, friend,
And we are still afloat, do not despair.'
'I shall not live,' he said, 'to see the day,
So deadly is my wound, but you, perchance,
Have not a mortal hurt, so listen me:
About my neck there is a golden chain,
And unto it a locket is attached;
I give it to your hand. If you survive
When this dread war is done, take it for me

To Mistress Cath'rine Stone, of Iowa,
My dear and loving wife.' And then he gave
The bauble in your fingers unto me.
I promised him, if so my life was spared,
I'd grant his last request. All through the night,
Between the gusts of pain, we talked of home.
He of his wife and child, I having none,
Of such as I possessed.

The break of day
Beheld his life go out against my breast,
Wet with our common blood. I count it not
A shame to manliness to say I wept.
Love is a flower which in a fertile soil
Grows wonderfully fast, and I loved one
Known but a single night.

They took him home
Wrapped in the stars and stripes, and made his grave.
Till peace returned I marched from field to field,
From foe to foe as there was need of me,
And lived my dangers through. When all was done
It found me many leagues from Iowa.
I was impelled to execute the trust
He had reposed in me, but soldier friends
Besought that I should go 'across the plains,'

And they at length prevailed. I told myself,
When conscience troubled me, that I would
come
Again inside a year, and seek her out
And set the matter right. I meant the best
That any man could mean, but I was false."
Less unto them than to himself he spoke,
He paused and shook his head, then said again,
"A man is false who fails to keep a trust
Whatever his excuse." Then looked about
As suddenly awaked. "I must be gone;
I hear the voice again calling to me
Beyond the purple hills." The soldier's son
And Andrew were in tears. It was a scene
Fit for a painter's brush.
Recovered first,
Young Andrew in his turn talked of the past,
How Major Stone was father of the man
Here standing by his side. Incredulous
Old Allan peered at him and said, "Well! well!"
Then strained him to his breast.

Gone was the charm
That for so long had held them to the West.
And all the theme was home and Iowa.
The haunting voice the old man muttered of
Grew audible to all. It cried "Come home!"
And would not give them peace until they came.

III.

An autumn evening and the wailing winds
Blew o'er the chimney tops. The vapors curled
Over the logs and dallied with the flame.
The fitful light revealed a woman there,
Rocking with folded hands. Her knitting lay
Forgotten on the floor; a kitten rolled
And tumbled in the threads, and one by one
Drew ev'ry needle out.

A table stood
Clad in its snowy cloth ready for tea.
A slender girl in dainty gown of blue
Lifted the urn that simmered on the hearth
And poured the goblets full.

Then turned the knob
In answer to the knock of Master Joe
Bringing the evening mail.

Three bearded men
Stood in the waning light outside the door;
One asked for Mrs. Stone, and Cath'rine rose
With hand upon her heart, and pallid cheek
Blanched by a sudden fear. The firelight fell
Upon her as she stood.

There was a cry
Half inarticulate, and she was clasped
In Raymond's loving arms.

Soon Madeline
Came forward with a lamp brightly aglow
And order was restored. With woman's wit
The little teacher gave a cordial hand
Unto the wanderer, although her heart
Beat madly as his own. He had not thought
To find her serving here in his own house;
He never had been told. But she foresaw
The possibility of his return
And was somewhat prepared. He introduced
Young Andrew as his friend, and then the sage
And soldier, Allan Searle. He spoke her name
"Miss Madeline Van Dorn" half-heartedly—
How could he tell if she were still unwed
After a half decade?
The soldier stared
In wonder at the girl. "Van Dorn!" he said,
"Not Madeline Van Dorn, my brother's child?
My wits are leaving me." The other four
Exchanged a look of startled questioning.
The maid drew back close to the widow's side,
Half frightened, half ashamed.
"It cannot be,"
Insisted Allan Searle. "And yet, why not?
'Tis twenty years, aye, more than twenty years
Since I had word of him." Then to the girl,
"Was Richard Lee Van Dorn your father's
name?"

She answered, "Yes; what do you know of
him?"
"What do I know? What do I know of him?"
He cried pathetically, and opened wide
His arms toward the girl. "For twenty years
I've known nothing at all—so far I've strayed—
Yet we were brothers once, long years ago.
I, too, am named Van Dorn, though since the
war
I have been Allan Searle, my given name,
As oft the fashion is in mountain wilds
'Mongst rude and boist'rous men. Have you
not heard
Your father speak of me? Where is he now
That you are here alone, you little thing?"
He laid his hand upon the yellow curls
Now quaintly coiled about her shapely head.
His voice was soft as speaking to a child—
She seemed a child to him. She answered him:
"My parents both are dead these dozen years,
Yet I remember well my uncle's name
Was Allan Searle Van Dorn. He went to war
And never more returned."
"And where," he asked,
"Are those two dark-haired girls your father
had
By his first frail young wife who died insane?
Lucy and Elinor?"

The question fell
Like thunder on the ears of Catherine,
Nor were the other three less stupefied.
"Another wife?" "A wife who died insane?"
No one had heard he had another wife!
So they exclaimed in great astonishment.
When Allan learned they, too, had passed away
He bowed his head and wept. And Madeline
Made bold to comfort him.
Mother and son
Looked in each other's eyes, through shining tears.
A volume in the look. Like mist at morn
Their troubles had dispersed. There was no bar
'Twixt him and Madeline. And God was good.
* * * * * * * *
So many things unlooked for had occurred
That supper was forgotten for awhile,
Remembered now was hospitality.
The women deftly rearranged the plates,
Made tea afresh, and brought their hidden stores
Of polished silver forth. The simple meal
Set for the lonely twain, grew to a feast
Fitting the glad return.
Cakes and preserves,
And squares of snowy bread, added their cheer
And comfort to the board.

The "bachelors"
Unused to such delights, gave endless praise,
And proved they were sincere.
When tea was done,
Before the cheerful fire they all sat down,
And Allan told again to Catherine
The story we have heard. The long-delayed
Commission was fulfilled.
And though she wept,
They were not bitter tears.

* * * * * * * *

Put out the lights,
The story is complete.
The lovers stand
Beneath God's bending sky pledged each to each
Now and forevermore, forevermore.

* * * * * * * *

Oh, Love! Oh, harp, with amethystine strings,
Played by the winds of God! There is no sound
In all the universe so sweet, so passing sweet.
No care nor pain, no sorrow nor distress
Can reach the soul that is filled full of thee.
There is no life but love, and love, and love!

MY COUNTRY.

Once Homer sang in sweet poetic strains
Of fair Ionia's vineyards and her plains.
Her wars and fleets, her heroes brave and strong,
Have lived through all the ages in his song.
Her walls of stone that gleamed against the sky
And seemed the powers of chaos to defy,
Lie wasted now and humbled to the dust,
Her warriors' swords have crumbled back to rust.
The olive groves which o'er her hillsides lay
Are bleak and barren in this later day;
Her marble baths with jewels crusted o'er
Have passed away from fair Ionia's shore.
Those ancient gods whose temples whitely shone
Have lost their powers, and lie—forgotten stone;
Those golden nets from which the roses fell
On lordly guest, have vanished like a spell.
Aye, warrior bold, and temple with its god
Are but a dream of the enchanter's rod;
The poet passed, but left his words of flame
To tell his country's glory and her fame.

No claim have I to Homer's magic power,
The muse, to me, was chary of her dower;
Yet fate bequeathed a country unto me
More fair than any isle of eastern sea.
My country's vales from morn to eve extend,
My country's skies in opal oceans end;
My country's mountains Jove would fear to scale,
For God has wrapped their summits with a veil,
She has her flocks, and herds of pleasant kine,
Her vineyards, too, bring forth the purple wine.
Her forests stand like armies on her walls,
Guarding her temples grand, and marble halls.
My country, too, has argosies and fleets,
Her sailors bold unfurl the snowy sheets;
My country's foes her widespread borders shun,
My country's noble heroes yield to none,
My country's pride is in her fertile soil,
Her waving fields her multitudes who toil,
Her rivers broad that murmur to the sea,
Her starry flag proclaiming Liberty.

My country's God is not a god of stone,
He fashioned this broad universe alone.
Ne'er shall He fall dishonored to the dust;
Worthy is He of all our love and trust.
Oh, halting lines, oh, cold, unkindly muse!

To bind my feeble tongue and so refuse
To me the joy my country to extol
In tones that shall resound from pole to pole;
Thou happy bard; thy country is decayed,
Thy mortal dust within the tomb is laid.
Yet till the sun shall set to rise no more
Thy songs shall breathe of fair Ionia's shore.
And might I tell in words that could not die
The glory of our mountains, vales, and sky,
What loyal hearts beat in this golden west,
I might go gladly, proudly to my rest.

—Isabel Richey.

WEALTH.

Who has such vast wealth as I,
Such unending pleasure;
Golden sun and sapphire sky,
Em'rald fields that rippling lie
Far as eye can measure.

Discs of gold are at my feet,
Diamonds gem the grasses,
Priceless incense rich and sweet
From the flowers among the wheat
On each breeze that passes.

Silver streams that murmur low
'Gainst their pearl-set edges,
Silver stars that softly glow,
Or a parti-colored bow,
Bending o'er the hedges.

Purple velvet curtains fall
Where the sun is setting,
Amber fire-flies o'er the wall
Of the misty evening crawl
On a white lace netting.

All is mine, and if you will
All is yours, wayfarer;
Each may own the vale and hill,
Each may gaze and gaze his fill;
Come, be a welcome sharer.

—Isabel Richey.

Plattsmouth, Neb.

MOTHERHOOD.

Good by, little boy, good by,
I never had thought of this,
That some day I'd vainly sigh
For the baby I used to kiss.
That into his corner a man would grow,
And I should not miss him nor see him go,
Till all of a sudden the scales would fall,
And one be revealed to me straight and tall,
Then I should be startled and sadly cry,
"Good by, little boy, good by!"

Good by, little boy, good by,
You are going despite my tears;
You cannot, and neither can I,
Successfully cope with the years.
They fit for the burden that all must bear,
And then, at their pleasure, they place it there.
I love you, too, but my heart is sore
For the child who has gone to return no more,
And deep in my bosom I sadly cry,
"Good by, little boy, good by!"

—Isabel Richey.

SILENCE.

The deepest sorrow is the unexpressed;
The eye may speak it by its diamond glint;
The cheek may tell it by it's pallid tint;
We read the story in the heaving breast.

The arms imply it by their mournful fold,
The form by sinking to the lap of earth;
These voiceless symbolings and mute are worth
A thousand words in which our woes are told.

The joys which thrill us to the inmost soul
Are never spoken; paltry words are weak.
The trembling eyeball may in silence speak;
The lids uplifted may reveal the whole.

The hand may tell it by its tender touch;
The head express it by it's loving droop.
The words we barter with deceive and dupe,
But silence, silence telleth overmuch.

Yes, truly, silence is the angel's tongue.
The language spoken in the land of Rest—
The voice immortal in the human breast,
In which th' emotions of the soul are sung.
December 22, 1897.

APART.

The words you do not speak to me, dear heart,
  Like golden bells make music in my soul;
  They pierce the quivering silence to their goal
As flies unto its destined aim the dart.

The look you guard so carefully from me,
  Lest it should intercepted be and read,
  Still meets mine eye, just as the silver thread
Becomes at last a portion of the sea.

The arms you never reach in love, my own,
  Because a gulf is fixed our lives between,
  Still fold me round and on your breast I lean—
In presence of the world we are alone.

You go your way, you cannot turn aside,
  Because I love you so you must be true;
  Because you love me, dear, I must be, too,
Both better for the things that are denied.
  March 28, 1897.

THREE DREAMS.

I lay upon my bed and dreamed.

In my dream I wandered in a distant land. Date palm trees towered upward, and their tops were crowned with umbrellas of broad, green leaves, and underneath hung golden lamps that burned scented oil.

The sky was blue, and the air was sweet with spices.

I thought that my heart rejoiced because I had found so fair a country.

Then, behold, a strange thing came to pass. On every side a mirror stretched and I beheld myself a thousand times reflected, wandering under the palm trees.

I marveled, and I said, "I am alone; there is none to dispute my sway."

And only my voice answered me in endless repetition, "Alone, alone, alone!"

The sound was like music in my ears.

For days I roamed in the tree-bordered avenues, and presently I noticed that the aisles narrowed and my own face confronted me more and more closely.

At last I found myself in a labyrinth, a maze of glittering glass.

A feeling of horror came over me, an oppression seized me. I longed to rise and flee from myself, but was powerless.

In agony I cried out, and sought to cover my eyes with my hands to shut out the sight of my hateful visage.

My struggles broke the bands of sleep, and I arose thanking God for my deliverance.

Again I slept and dreamed.

I stood upon a plain, vast mountains rose above me and glorious heights painted crimson and purple and yellow reached almost to heaven. Beside me rolled a stream, so clear, so clear—a ribbon of silver.

I thought that trees grew out of the sand and their branches were gay with birds of brilliant plumage.

And the air was vocal with their songs.

Again I stood alone and I dreamed that all these hills were mine.

I looked about in rapture. I believed myself in Paradise.

I walked for hours and days, and felt no need of rest.

I spoke aloud and said, "I want for nothing,"

and lo, a thousand tiny voices whispered, "Nothing, nothing, nothing!"

And there was something in the sound that fell like lead upon my heart.

A cloud came over the sky and a raindrop touched my cheek.

I sighed and cast my eyes upon the earth.

And at my feet a hoard of tiny insects wrought. I watched their busy labors.

And I beheld that never a one wrought singly.

I looked away and wandered idly on.

Something seemed lost from the murmur of the stream and the music of the birds.

And yet I knew that from them nothing was lost.

But every hour the feeling grew and my ear became deaf to the sound of rippling river and echoing song. My eyes grew blind to sky and flower and painted rock, until at last I could bear it no longer, and I cried aloud:

"A lesser world would better fit my needs!"

And I awoke.

A third time I slept and dreamed.

I was in a great city and the busy hum of life fell on my ears.

The sky was gray with smoke that rose from a thousand chimneys.

The buildings were dingy and beaten by wind and weather.

Wagons and carts rolled incessantly back and forth, and nothing was lovely.

Silence was a thing unknown.

Then I thought that I entered the factories and workshops and looked with interested gaze upon the unfamiliar scenes.

All was life and activity, and I took note that none seemed depressed or sad.

And I, too, caught the fever of action.

I joined the busy workers and an inward exultation swelled in my breast. Songs burst from my lips, and my pulse bounded with joy. And I thought that when the sun drove his blazing chariot behind the roofs and towers I went with the rest into the streets again. I marveled that none looked sad or seemed forlorn. No empty hand was held out for alms. And I said, "Where are the beggars?"

And one of the workmen laughed aloud.

He said, "Where all labor none may want."

And I said, "Where are the great?"

He said, "Where all labor all are great."

And I marveled silently.

At last I asked him, "Where are the discontented?"

And he replied, "Where all labor, none are discontented."

Then in my dream I thought that years passed and I wrought by day and slept by night and I forgot the word "discontent."

Plattsmouth, Neb.

THE HUNTER.

Some day when the King of Terrors,
Roaming o'er his boundless kingdom,
Spies thee 'mid the reeds and grasses,
And with hunter's ready instinct
Pierces thee with shining arrow,
Shrink not backward, but embrace him;
Kiss the hand that gives thee freedom.
Fear not that he seize and bind thee
In pale death-robes for a season,
Death is but a crossing over,
Sleeping, dreamless, on a journey
Waking to a fairer morning
In a brighter, better country.

—Isabel Richey.

CHOOSING.

A wild wind swept through a florist's store,
And scattered his wares through the open door,

And flung them out in the dusty street
Under the tread of the hurrying feet.

A child with sun in its wind-blown hair,
Gathered the ox-eyed daisies there.

A sweet-faced nun just stooped and prest
Three frail white blossoms to her breast.

A woman, dark with the brand of shame,
Gathered a rose with a heart of flame.

A man of gold, and fame, and power,
Caught up leaves but never a flower.

Then one who was neither great nor grand
Caught four white rosebuds in her hand.

The eve came on and they each came by—
We watched them pass, my heart and I.

The wind-blown hair was smooth and neat,
But the daisies lay at the fair one's feet.

The nun still carried her emblems three,
Her badge of faith, hope, charity.

The rose was dead and its petals lay,
Over the pavement cold and grey.

The leaves were bound on the kingly brow—
But no longer green, they were withered now.

And she who gathered the rosebuds white,
Was wearing four full blooms at night.

A SCAR.

"What is it little one?" It is a scar—
The token of a deep and bitter wound.
It cured, you see, but left a fiery bar
That shows in contrast to its pallid ground.

"And does it hurt?" Why, if you press it, dear,
But otherwise it causes little pain;
Yet when I'm sad I sometimes let a tear
Fall on this darkly vivid crimson stain.

"And will it always stay?" It always will;
There is no help for anything like this.
I'll bear it to my grave, my darling, still
It seems a little better for your kiss.

"Does everybody have them?" Yes, alas,
I fear they do, though some may be unseen;
For I have noticed that it comes to pass
Fate touches each one with her sabre keen.

THE FISHER MAIDEN.

My lover fares on the wide, wide sea;
Ho, for the waves and the white foam flying!
He bringeth a necklace of gems for me—
Then why should my lips be sighing!

My love is far on the isles of spice;
Ho, for the isles and the lotus blowing!
He bringeth a garment of matchless price—
Then why should my tears be flowing!

He thinks of me oft in the night, I trow,
Ho, for the night with the white stars burning!
And he thinketh of me in the daylight's glow,
So why should my heart be yearning!

Better to me is the homespun dress,
And a lover that e'er by the fireside lingers,
With never a necklace of gems to bless,
Or rings of gold for my fingers.

For life is a dream that must end too soon,
And love is a draught for the gods, I'm thinking,
While youth is a garden with roses strewn
We two should be drinking, drinking!

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

Once there was a great and powerful king who ruled over a vast dominion.

And he had palaces of unrivaled splendor, and crowns, and jewels, and robes, and sceptres, and all the wonderful paraphernalia that makes up the state and dignity of a king.

And for a long time he found pleasure in his possessions.

But one evil night he awoke from his slumbers, and through his crystal window he beheld a beautiful star scintillating in the heavens. And immediately he arose upon his pillow and cried, "Fetch me the star!"

Then the dozens of courtiers and lords and men of high rank, who kept watch beside his bed, looked at each other in consternation, and they said, "How shall we obtain the star?"

And the king answered, "I care not how you obtain it, but bring it to me at once."

And they set about to appease the king.

And they took counsel together, and they said: "It is impossible to obtain the star, but not impossible to cause the king to believe that we have obtained it."

And the idea pleased the courtiers and lords and men of high rank.

And one lord said: "There is in a distant land (so I have read) a most magnificent jewel that rivals in brightness this same star that the king so craves. Let us send a man to purchase it and bring it hither. Then shall we say unto the king: "Here is the star," and then shall the king be satisfied, believing that he has the star even though it be not the real star." And they all applauded him, and said: "It shall be so."

And straightway they sent a man to the distant country, and gave to him vast sums that he might get the jewel and thereby please the king.

And they said to the ruler: "One has gone to bring the star."

And the king waited with great patience for his return—considering that he was a king. And presently he did return, and brought the jewel, which was a diamond of peerless beauty. And the king believed it was the star and was happy.

And the courtiers and the lords and men of high degree were happy, too, in that they had successfully deceived the king.

But alas, it fell out that the king awoke again

in the night, and lo, the star still twinkled in its place!

And he cried aloud: "The star! the star! I have been deceived!"

And the king was angry, and he called his courtiers and lords about his bed and taxed them with deceit, and knowing not what answer to make they fell upon their knees and acknowledged that they had deceived the king.

And again they took counsel together, for the king was exceeding sad.

And that same lord who had suggested the substitution of the jewel said: "I have read that prayer will bring a thing to pass; let us pray that the king may obtain the star."

And another said: "It can do no harm; and let us also tell the same unto the king that he, too, may pray, since nothing should be left undone."

And they did so accordingly.

Then they prayed with much fervor, and the king prayed also, that the star might come down to the king.

But many days passed and it came not, neither moved a hand's-breadth from its place in the heavens.

And they knew not what to do.

At this time a stranger came into the city of the king.

He was old and grey, and his shoulders were bent with the weight of years.

And he heard the story of the king's distress.

And when he had heard it he said:

"The case is not hopeless, if thou and the king will do according to my word."

And they said: "We will do as thou sayest, and the king also."

And he said: "Herein hast thou failed. Pray not that the king shall obtain the star, but that the king may cease to desire the star."

And they prayed with much fervor.

And the king prayed also.

And it came to pass that the king slept upon his bed in peace, and forgot that he had craved the star.

And the king was restored to happiness, and his kingdom to prosperity.

—Isabel Grimes Richey.

November 8, 1895.

RELIEF.

I saw the blade descending, and I cried,
"Have pity, Lord, and spare me from the blow!"
With all my strength I sought to turn aside
The cruel thing that threatened me, but no.

The weapon struck and cleft my heart in twain—
Instead of pain I found it gave me rest!
The throbbing ceased nor ever came again
To torture me and burn within my breast.

And now I know that it is best for me;
The dread is past, I have no more to lose;
I am secure from harm, bereft, but free.
God knew I was not wise enough to choose.

—Isabel Richey.

April 16, 1900.

TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

Poor creatures we, of time and circumstance,
  Howe'er so carefully we lay our plan:
A straw, a trifle, hinders our advance
  And drags us lower than where we began.

The unresponsive smile, th' averted eye,
  May mark a long continued struggle "lost;"
A careless, inconsiderate reply
  A ruined life, a broken heart may cost.

A jest ill-timed may rankle in the heart
  And grow in bitterness and cause a breach—
Till one-time friends are severed far apart
  Where reconciliation cannot reach.

The tender word the lips may long to speak,
  And yet by some strange impulse oft withhold,
For other opportunity may seek
  Till lips and hearts are motionless and cold.

And so I say that time and circumstance
  Beset our way and turn our hopes awry,
By straws and trifles hinders our advance
  Until the golden moment passeth by.

NOTHING TO DO.

Nothing to do but sit with hands together
And watch the flicker of the dying flame;
Helpless and voiceless sit, and wonder whether
Time can continue, life go on the same.

Nothing to do but look through tear-wet lashes,
With sight that trembles like a wind-swept sea,
Into the sombre cloud of cold, gray ashes—
All that remains upon this earth for me.

Nothing to do but cover up the embers
And sweep the hearth and hang a wreath above,
A wreath of green, to tell that one remembers
The glory of a light whose name was Love.

INFLUENCE.

I dropped a tear into a sunlit sea—
  It quickly spread and clouded all the light.
The bird forgot his singing in the tree;
  The flowers closed their leaves as tho' 'twere night;
The children shivered and with bated breath
Whispered of misery and pain and death.

I cast a prayer into a sea of doubt—
  The waves subsided into perfect peace;
A light irradiated all about
  And gave to hope a thousandfold increase;
The robin twittered on the tree outside;
The daisies nodded in the meadow wide.

I threw a smile into a darkened life—
  It grew and blossomed into happiness;
And joy came in and dwelt, while shaméd strife
  Fled to some bleak and dreary wilderness;
The children shouted in their merry glee,
And all the world seemed full of ecstacy!

THE UNATTAINABLE.

The woodman's ax along the forest rings;
The giant falls defenseless at his feet;
Within his breast an unseen mentor sings
Of some far city street.

The pilot sits aloft beside his wheel,
And guides the ship across the briny deep;
While o'er his sight the tender visions steal
Of wife and babes asleep.

The workman toils from morn till evening time
To rear his brood upon his frugal wage.
While hopes denied continually chime,
And fierce ambitions rage.

The woodman lies beside his tree at last;
The pilot sails into a fairer shore;
The workman sleeps when even time is past,
And all their cares are o'er.

KISS ME GOOD NIGHT.

Kiss me good night, my baby, for thy lashes
droop;
Sleep's snowy angels pelt thy lids with
flowers;
They smile and beckon thee to join the troop
That roams Elysium through starlit hours;
I hear the echo of the silver horn,
Go, but return again at morn.

Kiss me good night, my darling, for the roses
sleep;
The lily bends her stately head to rest;
A purple haze is rising o'er the deep;
The moon aweary falls adown the west;
May dreams a golden net about thee weave,
I go, but return again at eve.

Kiss me good night, beloved, for the sails are
set;
The boatman leans upon his bended oar;
I fain would linger for thine eyes are wet;
The red flag waves upon thy cheek no more;
The circles shall not die against the sand
Ere Charon wait for thee upon the strand.

—Isabel Richey.

MORTALITY.

The whitest hand that ever was entwined
With gem-set rings of gold,
Lay in a casket black and satin-lined
When all was told.

The brightest eye that ever flashed its fire
And made a pulse to leap,
Was closed at last in darkness deep and dire—
In endless sleep.

The roundest cheek with covering of rose
That mortal ere possessed,
Bloomed but a day, and surely at its close
By earth was pressed.

The reddest lip as quickly, surely fades
As doth the summer bloom,
And hides at last where only gloom pervades—
Within the tomb.

Mortality, hast thou no thing to give
Which cannot fade and die?
"One, only one, thy noble deeds shall live
Where'r thou lie!"

—Isabel Richey.

January 11, 1898.

THE STAR.

Just as true as yonder star
  Shines into the ocean
From the purple depths afar,
  So is my devotion.

Though the waters answer not,
  Though the distance sever,
Constant to its weary lot,
  Shines the star forever.

Storms may sweep the ocean's face,
  Gloom may darkly cover,
Yet the star is in its place
  When the storms are over.

I am like the silent star;
  I can only love you;
Tenderly and from afar
  Keep my watch above you.

Grief will hide me from your eyes,
Sorrow's dart will pain you,
Like the ray from yonder skies
Would my love sustain you.

And when all the storms are past,
After calm returning,
You will find me at the last,
In your sky still burning.

—Isabel Richey.

October 10, 1894.

UNRETURNING VOYAGERS.

There is a sea from whose remoter shore
No vessel ever wanders back to this,
To tell what sands the silent waters kiss
Or bring a word from sailors gone before.
Whether they landed safe the freight they bore
On some fair isle of everlasting bliss,
Or sank with it to some unknown abyss
We cannot tell—but they return no more.

Each makes the voyage for himself alone,
And if a line or message there may be,
'Tis written in a tongue to us unknown—
Some language unto which we have no key,
Or like the image with it's eyes of stone,
If they return we have no sight to see.

JULY.

Along the borders of the evening sky
A shim'ring yellow haze that burns to red,
And airy lines of purple silken thread—
A picture to entrance an artist's eye.

Contented cattle slowly wand'ring by,
Still browsing, though since early morn they've fed
On grass and flowers, or stood upon the bed
Of the still golden river of July.

Across the fields the sickles flash and gleam,
The promise falls into the reaper's hand,
The rainbow tinted fish dart from the stream
To catch the drowsy insect on the sand;
The very air seems wrapped within a dream
And falls asleep upon the happy land.

—Isabel Richey.

MT. SHASTA.

Oh, Shasta, ermine-mantled, golden-crowned!
Most royal monarch of the vastly plain,
Unending is thy solitary reign;
Thy subjects bow before thee in profound
And speechless awe. The purple mists have gowned
Thee in most kingly robes, the mighty main
Continually strives and struggles to attain
Nearer thy feet, oh Ruler most renowned!

All other sovereigns bow to time and age,
Lay down the sceptre, crumble back to dust,
Thou fearest not what havoc time may wage,
Thou art, when sword of steel hath turned to rust.
With seamed brow thou lookest out to sea,
Thou cravest not a son to follow thee.
December 12, 1894.

MY SHIPS.

I sent a vessel far, far out to sea,
  Its cargo was of hopes as fair and bright
  As butterflies in summer, and as light
As silvery notes of merry childish glee.
I bade it bring fruition back to me.
  And watched it till it wavered out of sight
  Against the far-off border, in its flight
Unto the country of its destiny.

The day wears on and it has not returned,
  But ships I knew not of have drifted in,
Laden with treasures that I would have spurned
  When youth was with me, and unrest, its twin.
Yet dearer, dearer, by a thousandfold
Than that dream-vessel which I loved of old.

—Isabel Richey.

PASSING YEARS.

Take notice of thyself and mark the change
Wrought on thy spirit by the passing years.
How deeper sinks the fountain of thy tears;
How wider, wider, grows thy vision's range.
The confidence of youth has given way
To doubts and grave uncertainties and fears—
Thou findest, ere the phantom barque appears,
Thy soul in waiting for the boatman grey.

Thou'rt like some rivulet that takes its rise
Upon the bosom of a grassy mead.
It wanders onward under alien skies,
Its channel broadens as it haveth need;
It finds, at last, a passage to the sea—
The ocean of God's love awaiteth thee.

—Isabel Richey.

THE UNIVERSAL LOT.

The torch of Time has set the woods aflame
To light the exit of the passing year;
The yellow beacons gleam afar and near—
Fires on the altar builded to his fame.
Awhile ago in em'rald robes he came,
His pensive blue eye glistened with a tear;
He goes a warrior with a bow and spear
Bearing the scars of battle on his frame.

Pass on, old year, king for an hour, a day,
Thy mausoleum waits, a snowy marble bed;
A hoard of other kings beyond the grey
Mists fain would welcome thee among the dead.
'Tis thine, 'tis ours, the universal lot—
Tears, conflict, maybe glory—then forgot.

—Isabel Richey.

August 31, 1895.

ENVIRONMENT.

Believe him not who cries "Environment
  Maketh the man!" For man himself must be
  The sturdy shaper of his destiny.
If he be true all earth cannot prevent
That glory he attain; but if content
  With crumbs; if weak not caring to be free,
  Though opportunity were like a sea
About him, he were still a bow unbent.

'Tis but the coward's cry, whoever will
  May burst his bond in twain and find his place,
The place that God intended him to fill
  If faithful to his Maker and his race.
Behind such walls as this the weak may hide,
The strong, the worthy will not be denied.
  April 13, 1897.

L. of C.

ESTRANGEMENT.

When death has claimed a friend we mourn and
mourn,
But still are comforted because we know
That while we meet with them no more below
They wait and watch for us beyond the bourne
From whence no traveler returns. But shorn
Of one who walks this footstool still, we grow
Soul-sick and weak, heart-hungry, craving so
A word of sympathy. This is life's thorn.

Oh, could some magic from the heavens lend
An hour of that old time that used to be,
No other blessing that the gods could send,
No other gift from either land or sea
Could make my heart so happy, friend, oh
friend,
Why have you grown so far away from me?

TO AN ICEBERG.

From what far unknown country camest thou,
  Pale relic of a broken snow-white world?
  From whence wast thou, pellucid fragment, hurled
In such strange semblance of a ship with prow
  And keel and full-spread sail and stern and bow,
  All carved with faithful hand? What waters curled
  About thee when thou first set sail? Who furled
Thy gleaming sheets or opened them as now?

Perchance thou art the ship that plies between
  This time-worn country and the land of Rest,
Whose seas are silver and whose banks are green
  Hesperides, the islands of the west,
The purple hills no mortal eye hath seen
  Where each shall find the object of his quest.

LONELY.

Strange, that the sun's bright rays should follow thee,
And leave me moping in the faded light;
Strange, that the bird sits voiceless as at night
And all the blossoms close upon the tree.
Upon the air no sound of busy bee
Preparing for the winter's storm and blight—
Nothing but silent spectres clothed in white—
Ghosts of the joys that have forsaken me.
Yet who could blame the sun that follows thee?
I, too, would gladly follow if I could.
And who can wonder that the bird and bee
Sit dull and lifeless in the leafy wood,
For who could happy be when thou art gone
Or labor in a light so pale and wan?

THE TYRANT LOVE.

Oh, think to fetter with a rope of sand,
The river deep and turn it from its way;
Or bid the fiery monarch of the day
Unmoved to hang at motion of thy hand;
Bind down the blazing fagots with a band
Of braided flax and think the flames to stay;
Seek thy consuming hunger to allay
With stones and pebbles from the barren strand;

But never hope the subtle chain to break
Which Love has welded close around thy heart,
By any effort which thy will can make
By any firm resolve, by any art
The mortal mind can frame, life may forsake,
But Love, the Tyrant, never will depart.

CONQUEST.

And now the sable armies of the Night
  Are setting forth with shining lance in hand
  To rout Day's worn and overwearied band
And put an ancient enemy to flight.
Comes forth their queen all clad in silver white
  To lead the legions under her command,
  And execute the tactics she has planned—
  This patriotic Joan of the Height.

The king looks back and hurls a shaft of gold;
  He waves his sword to rally yet once more
His broken lines; his banners are unrolled
  And stream in red and green behind, before,
Then waver, waver, fall; the king is old,
  The Night has triumphed and the war is o'er.

TO-MORROW.

Say not "to-morrow," for it is a dream
  Which time may not fulfill,
A phantom lamp whose light may never gleam
  On mountain, vale, or hill.

Count not to-morrow, for it is a ship
  Which may be lost at sea;
The welcome waiting on thine eager lip
  May ne'er be claimed of thee.

Boast not to-morrow, when the sun goes down
  He leaves no pledge behind;
When gold and crimson in the darkness drown
  They may no rescue find.

Say not "to-morrow, if thou keep thy faith
  Of love thou shalt drink deep;"
For oh, to-morrow, is a wraith, a wraith
  And thou may'st lie asleep.

Trust not to-morrow, but to-day, to-day
  The golden chalice drain;
For thou art mortal, thou art clay, art clay,
  And life may not remain.

THE BRIDE.

I saw a bride to-day with dark brown curls
Caught high above her forehead like a crown;
Her tiny ears had ear-rings set with pearls—
Her face was whiter than her satin gown.

She had been wedded but a single hour,
And yet I saw no shadow of a groom;
Within her hand she held a waxen flower,
A rosebud that was only half in bloom.

One told me that the groom was old and grim,
And only stood a moment by her side,
Then placed his seal upon her finger slim—
How comes I saw no ring upon that bride?

Another said that he was like a god
With locks about his brow like yellow thread,
That violets sprang up where e'er he trod—
Such was the lover that the lady wed.

I cannot tell if he be blithe or bent,
Methinks I would be happier if I knew;
But this I know, she seemed well content—
Perchance the second speaker told me true.

THE BOOK OF LIFE.

Life is a book which ev'ry eye must read
  Howe'er so willingly 'twould skip the leaf;
  Tho' black the page with sorrow and with grief,
Tho' unto death's dark chamber it may lead.
We may not turn away, nor even speed
  To brighten themes. For some the story's brief;
  A summer day with flowers but ne'er a sheaf—
Bright flowers and bloom, but ne'er a thorn or weed.

But oh, for some 'tis long—'tis overlong,
  And dull and dreary repetition lend
But meagre int'rest to the myriad throng
  Of puppet actors who but smirk and bend,
Who neither love nor hate, do right nor wrong,
  What wonder if we yearn to read "The End."

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